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AUTHOR Straut, Diana Scarselletta
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ABSTRACT

School-based management (SBM) and its counterpart, shared decision making, raise traditional questions about power, representativeness, decentralization, and professionalism. This paper turns to history to provide a framework for untangling the issues that have come to the fore in current debates about power and shared school governance. In a historical look at school labor relations and the governance of education, the paper suggests that, in many ways, teacher associations have come full circle. A review of historical records supports two propositions: (1) Teacher unions have initiated and supported significant social change; and (2) unions, along with other stakeholder groups, play an important role as guardians of democratic processes. The paper revisits the objectives of teacher organizations and issues of educational decision making within a historical context, placing current debates against a backdrop of the struggles and ideals that shaped the earliest teacher unions. The formative union years, from the late 1800s to the mid 1920s, provide the framework for the historical discussion. A guiding assertion is that teacher unions have brought about and should continue to bring about radical change in education, but that they should take a historically informed approach to teacher involvement in school management. There is ample evidence that unionism and shared governance can and should coexist. Lessons from the history of teacher unionization are offered as guidelines for restructuring labor relations in the age of site-based, shared decision making. Two figures are included. (Contains 42 references.) (LMI)

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Paper prepared by
Diana Scarselletta Straut

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Please direct comments to the author at Cornell University, Department of Education, Kennedy Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853. Email: DMS13 @cornell.edu

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Abbreviations

AFT American Federation of Teachers

BOE Board of Education

CTF Chicago Teachers Federation

NEA National Education Association

NTA National Teachers Association

SBM Site-based management

SDM Shared decision making

INTRODUCTION and RATIONALE

Under an initiative known generically as Site Based Management (SBM), school districts across the United States are restructuring their governance plans to give a broad range of stakeholders a voice in educational policy. For teachers, and especially teacher unions, the innovation requires that long-standing dogmas about unionism be reexamined. Where issues of economics and conditions of employment were once clearly demarcated, they are now becoming enmeshed with the larger enterprise of schooling. Teachers, who for many years fought to take control of the conditions of their work, are now finding themselves in decision making arenas where both the nature and conditions of the work are being redefined.

The thick and growing body of literature about site based management is dominated by the claim that SBM is one of the most promising reforms in educational history (Kerchner & Mitchell, 1988; Koppich and Kerchner, 1993; Shanker, 1985; Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1994). However, SBM and its counterpart, shared decision making (SDM), raise some not so new questions about who should make decisions of educational policy, and where lies the best forum for discussion of "bread and butter" issues .[1] Traditional issues of power, representation, decentralization, and

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1. Site based management (SBM) refers to a policy where management and educational decisions regarding individual schools are made at the school rather than the central office level. Shared decision making (SDM) is a means toward the end of SBM. In SDM, decisions formerly made by one or a few people at the top of the organization are now made by a group of people representing various levels of the organization.

professionalism have reared their head in current debates about shared governance. The role of teacher unions in educational restructuring has become hotly debated. Some see unions as the keystone to grassroots school reform efforts, where others have gone so far as to suggest that teacher unions are "wrecking our schools" (Toch, et al., 1996).

This paper turns to history to provide a framework for untangling the issues which have come to the fore in current debates. In a historical look at school labor relations and the governance of education, this paper takes the position that, in many ways, teacher associations have come full circle. They are once again on the "boundary between unionism and professionalism" (Murphy, 1990). The boundary, however, is becoming increasingly blurred, and because of the battles already fought, teacher unions may be better equipped to face the issues raised in the current era of school restructuring. A review of historical records supports two propositions:

1. Teacher unions have initiated and supported significant social change.

2. Unions, along with other stakeholder groups, play an important role as guardians of democratic processes.

These historically informed propositions provide evidence that teacher unions have a legitimate place in issues of educational governance.

The purpose of this paper is to revisit the objectives of teacher organizations and issues of educational decision making within a historical context, placing current debates against a backdrop of the struggles and ideals which shaped the earliest teacher unions. The formative union years, from the late 1800's to the mid 1920's provide the framework for the historical discussion. A guiding assertion of this paper is that teacher unions have

brought about and should continue to bring about radical change in education, but that they should take a historically informed approach to teacher involvement in school management. There is ample evidence, historic and current, that unionism and shared governance can, in fact should, coexist. Lessons from the history of teacher unionization are offered as guidelines for restructuring labor relations in the age of site-based, shared decision making.

METHODOLOGY

The foundation for this paper is drawn from data found in a review of primary and secondary source historical records. Primary source documents were obtained from the Documentation Center at the New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University. The document search was limited to the two major national teacher organizations, The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and The National Education Association (NEA). Since state-level and local affiliations influenced developments at a national level, their histories have been interspersed with discussion of the NEA and AFT. Among the documents surveyed were constitutions, position papers, and meeting minutes from The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and The National Education Association (NEA). Data from primary sources was sorted around emergent themes of educational policy and governance.

A review of related historical literature (secondary sources such as books and journal articles) was used to expand upon the themes which emerged from the primary source review. Here, the relationship between labor relations and shared governance became more clear. Reviews from both sources were combined to create a chronology of the development of teacher organizations as a conduit to educational policy, and to inductively analyze the issues which accompanied the rise of teacher involvement in educational decision making. With the issues in hand, the emerging themes from current debates about shared governance were reviewed. Loosely structured questions such as "how did teacher voice in educational decision making evolve," "where is there evidence that teacher associations (and in turn, labor relations) have influenced the course of

shared decision making as it currently exists," and "what are the similarities and differences between the issues currently facing teachers involved in shared decision making, and the issues facing those who struggled for voice in the early days of the profession" guided the analysis and formation of the "full circle" theory.

CHRONOLOGY: An overview of the history of teacher organizations

Little can be found in the teacher union annals that is specific to shared decision making or site based management, yet the story told is really that of the controversy over decentralized decision making. The tales of the past are woven from threads which continue to influence contemporary school restructuring: power, professionalism, and voice. In the first half of the nineteenth century, public school control was a matter for city government. Local or ward boards managed schools, hiring and firing personnel, allocating resources, and deciding curriculum. Teachers were predominantly female, with normal school, if any, training, and working for minimal salary. Since it was common practice for them to board with community members, their personal lives were quite public and their actions were subject to Board scrutiny. Improprieties such as courting, dancing, and imbibing were cause for dismissal. Such restrictions were very much a reflection of the women's role in society at the time, translated into job-specific restrictions. Thus, female teachers were not connected to the political machinery, and the political machinery controlled schools. Teachers were "non-voting constituents," in a hierarchical organization of centralized, masculine authority (Murphy, 1990). While the larger American society may have heralded itself as democratic, the microcosm of public schooling was anything but democratic. Without a vote to cast, the predominantly female

teaching force of the nineteenth century had little, if any, opportunity to influence decision making.

Since educational reform movements typically reflect the dynamics of the larger society, it's no surprise to find that the earliest rumblings of discontent came in tandem with urbanization and immigration (Gelberg, 1993, Bowles and Gintas, 1976). The move to organize teachers began in urban cities where local governments launched school reform legislation that called for a centralized decision making system for schools. As urban populations grew, the nepotism of local or ward boards became increasingly suspect. Amidst cries of corruption, school reformers recommended changes characteristic of business or industry organizations. A pro-efficiency reform movement emerged, driven by reformers who proposed that Tayloristic models of industry be applied to schools, and that top supervisors establish "the specifications for the manufacture of educational output" (Cubberly, 1920, p.336). Proponents of reform called for a policy making board of directors--small and centralized--as well as a school superintendent to deal with day to day affairs in the schools (Murphy, 1990; Tyack, 1974; Urban, 1982;) The centralization advocates, primarily white, male, middle class administrators, argued that if control over educational policy were in the hands of college educated, "cultured" superintendents, then a professional decorum could be maintained and high quality public education was assured (Lazerson, 1984; Murphy, 1990; Selden, 1985;). Thus, a crisp distinction was made between teachers and administrators. Under the guise of professionalism, the administrative progressives pushed for a "new teacher"--one whose dedication to teaching was measured by "obeisance to the hierarchical forms

of control" and who valued efficiency over educational ideals (Murphy, 1990). The implied message of reformers was that teachers were not professionals, and that the management of schools belonged in the hands of professionals. It is within the debates over centralization and professionalism that the story of teacher organizations begins to unfold.

The National Education Association, 1857-mid 1920's

In 1857, teachers from 10 state affiliations existed under the name National Teachers' Association (NTA). The NTA existed for several years, with the goal of upgrading teaching to a profession. The NTA's plan for realizing its goal remained fairly vague until there was a strategic push to create a constitution for a new organization that would help teachers "make their work a profession, not just an ordinary vocation" (Murphy, 1990, Urban, 1982). From this effort emerged the National Education Association (NEA), which was an umbrella organization of four departments--Normal Schools, Higher Education, Superintendence, and Elementary Education. In its earliest form, the National Education Association (NEA) was an alliance which embraced "formalism and style" and eschewed anything which smacked of bourgeoisie (Murphy, 1990; Tyack, 1967; Wesley, 1957). The NEA and it's departments were committed to intellectual exchange, contending that professionalism was achieved through dialogue, debate, reason, and logic. This, however, had a leveling effect in the education community. As Wesley (1957) points out, "Educational reforms derived from the experience of teachers were antithetical to the [council's] stress upon discussion as the method of ascertaining professional truths" (p.270). There is little disagreement among

historians, or within NEA archives, that 'aristocratic' men--college deans, presidents, and professors--controlled the organization. As such, the NEA provided one of the largest and most credible forums for the discussion of educational issues. In his discussion of The Council of Education, an arm of the NEA, Urban (1982) points out, "The council members no doubt believed that they represented the best minds in American education, but in the words of the official historian of the NEA, the council 'stressed opinion rather than fact, judgments rather than evidence, assertion rather than demonstration, and general impressions rather than research'" (p.112). In spite of their alleged haughtiness and exclusionary policies, the NEA founders were unquestionably committed to advancing the cause of public education, and accepted their "obligation" in spite of the magnitude of the task (Wesley, 1957).

Women, who were not part of the NEA inner sanctum, began to rise up against the exclusionary structures of the NEA. As more and more women entered the teaching force, pressure to recognize the role of women in the NEA increased. As is discussed in the section which follows, the Chicago Teachers Federation, under the leadership of teachers Margaret Haley and Catharine Goggin, was a persistent challenge to the structure of the NEA.

There were incremental changes in NEA policy-- in 1870 women were granted the right to hold office, by the 1900's women were visible at NEA meetings--but gender inequities remained. In 1910, Ella Flagg Young was elected the first female president of the NEA. Some accounts maintain that hers was a primarily a position of honor, and that the real power remained in the hands of the male leadership. By 1912, teachers had

established committees which studied teachers salaries and working conditions, and a "Department of Classroom Teachers," which was organized to advise superintendents on school policy (Urban, 1982). Early on, teachers were taking active steps to influence policy in school; thus casting doubt on the accusation that they were concerned only with material gain. Ms. Young was a staunch advocate of teacher voice in educational policy. As a Superintendent in the Chicago school system, Ms. Young instituted a system of teacher councils which created avenue for teacher voice in the formulation of general school policy (Eaton, 1975). Such action made her unpopular with other administrators, and she resigned from the superintendency in 1915, after only six years in the post. She served only 2 years as NEA president, crusading for a breakdown of structures which isolated teachers in schools (Young, 1900).

As the teaching force grew, teachers became more aggressive about reorganizing the NEA to ensure organizational democracy. The NEA prided itself on its democratic operations, as it was "officially and actually in the hands of the members who attended the summer meetings," and who " had learned to work together harmoniously on programs, and in committees..."(Wesley, 1957, p.328). It was hardly a representative democracy, however, and teachers, male and female, fought a slow steady battle against the system that excluded them. Despite their disdain for trade unionism, the NEA, through its many commissions, began to address the shameful working conditions of public teachers, The Commission on the Emergency in Education, appointed in 1918, acknowledge a shortage of qualified teachers, abysmally low salaries, and overcrowded classrooms. At about the same time, the Committee on Salaries proposed that "teachers

should compel the nation to wake up and pay decent salaries by the application of the principal of collective bargaining (Wesley, 1957). The committee was hardly advocating legally prescribed collective bargaining, but they were nonetheless calling for Association attention to the plight of teachers in US classrooms. In 1920, the NEA established a representative assembly, acknowledging the need to organize a geographically dispersed membership, and to secure the participation of members. The regional assembly structure posed some dicey political problems, especially as membership grew well into the thousands, but it was a significant move toward establishing a democratic machinery for teachers who wished to participate in the NEA.

The emergence of the CTF, 1895-1920

In urban cities across the United States, government control of school matters was being channeled to local school boards. Teachers in large cities such as Atlanta, New York, San Francisco, Philadelphia, and Chicago began to organize themselves in response to legislation that placed control over schools in the hands of a chosen few (Murphy, 1990; Urban, 1985). Scholars and historians continue to debate the underlying motive of organizing teachers. While some hold that it was a thinly shrouded attempt to make economic gain and establish control, it's generally accepted that the hue and cry of the organizing teachers in large cities was 'to assure democracy in educational matters, and to improve the status of teachers' (Murphy, 1990; Selden, 1985; Urban, 1982; Wrigley, 1982). While the substance of the battle in each city might have been subtly different, the storylines are basically the same. Chicago's story is told here, as an example of how local organizing efforts shaped the development of national teacher organizations.

To ensure that their vision was realized, local reform governments in urban cities attempted to enact legislation that ensured centralized control. One example of such legislation was The Harper Bill, introduced to the Illinois legislature in 1899 by University of Chicago President William Rainey Harper. If enacted, the bill would have allotted significant authority to the Superintendent, reduced the size of school boards, and granted ninety-nine year land leases to corporations, with an assurance of no reassessment for tax purposes (Lazerman, 1984; Reid, 1982). Lead by sixth grade teacher Margaret Haley, Chicago teachers rallied to stop the Harper Bill. The issue was clearly control: The Harper Bill would place school control in the hands of one person, and suggest exacting standards without giving teachers a voice in their work. The teaching force swelled, in response to a growing US population, and Chicago teachers had amassed enough muscle to successfully stop The Harper Bill several times before it was finally enacted in 1917.

Chicago teachers had previously organized for two specific campaigns: In 1895 to seek a pension for teachers, and in 1897 to attain a raise. They officially organized as the Chicago Teachers Federation (CTF) in 1987 with three constitutional goals: to gain a raise, to protect teacher pensions, and to study parliamentary law (Murphy, 1990). Their agenda had fairly specific product goals, but also addressed attention to process--a mix of economic and professional considerations.

Seeking a national affiliation, the CTF turned to the National Education Association. The NEA, however, turned a supercilious eye to the teachers, who were perceived to be uneducated, militant, and generally incongruent with the academic

mystique which defined the NEA (Selden, 1985). Under the leadership of Haley and teacher Catharine Goggin, the CTF used its' largesse to challenge the NEA old guard. The NEA prided itself on being a professional organization, and made a clear distinction between their career-related aspirations and the economic demands of The CTF. The CTF never denied accusations that it was operating as a union, which probably decreased the group's credibility with the NEA executive committee. Nonetheless, the teachers in the Chicago organization persisted in their efforts to unveil the perceived hypocrisy of the NEA; an organization that honored premium credentials and professional decorum, but wouldn't recognize teachers who were trying to secure a worthy wage. In 1902, unable to secure official recognition within the NEA, the CTF affiliated with the Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL). This was a blatant declaration of their labor union ties. The struggle to gain equal voice and recognition for female teachers in the NEA became the focus of the CTF's work for several years.

The Chicago Teachers' Federation was comprised primarily of female grade school teachers. As a labor union, it continued to support education and social reform movements. The CTF took active roles in advocating popular elections for school boards, the establishment of child labor laws, reform of school finance and taxation, and the women's suffrage movement (Murphy, 1990; Eaton, 1975). Similar displays were happening in other urban cities. By 1913, more men had become active in teacher federations and the groups were taking a more militant posture. By 1915, the Chicago Board of Education had instituted a policy which forbade teacher membership in unions. They consequently fired a total of 68 teachers, of which 40 were union members. In

1916, on the heels of a yellow dog contract and The Loeb Rule, the Chicago teachers joined forces with teacher from eight other locales to accept a charter offered by American Federation of Labor President Samuel Gompers[2]. The teachers welcomed the opportunity to join forces with the AFL, which had committed itself to an agenda of workplace justice and social reform. Thus, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) was born.

By the 1920's, centralized management of schools was taking hold, though local Boards did not graciously concede to Superintendents. Once schools became centralized, definable hierarchies emerged. Since early on in the centralization movement many Superintendents found themselves wrestling with Boards for control of the schools, they began looking internally for ways to gain the authority needed to operate their schools. To their defense, they were given the charge of managing schools, but were not given requisite authority from the Boards of Education. Embracing an 'efficiency' ideology, the Superintendents relied on various personnel strategies to keep teachers beholden to new organizational arrangements (Tyack, 1974; Urban, 1982).

When teachers began challenging the autocracy, Superintendents launched a campaign to create a culture of professionalism. Their motives were not entirely tyrannical. They were generally concerned with expanding the system of education and improving educational quality. At the same time, they were trying to dissuade teachers

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[2] The Loeb Rule held that no teacher be employed by the Chicago Board of Education who belonged to an organization which affiliated with labor, or which employed full time paid staff who were not teaching in the schools. (see generally, Urban, 1982; Murphy, 1990).

from becoming "embarrassingly aggressive," so as not to upset the local interests which controlled purse strings (Selden, 1985). It wasn't the first time that the "professionalism" argument had been invoked to discourage teacher participation in aggressive activity.

The American Federation of Teachers, 1916-mid 1920's

The American Federation of Teachers existed in its early years as a federation of small locals, without a national agenda. Charles Stillman, a high school teacher, was elected as the first president, and Margaret Haley was appointed as organizer. There was minimal activity. The AFT published the American Teacher, a newspaper which addressed ways to improve teachers' working conditions, and advanced the unions' interest in educational quality and social reform. The nascent organization was hesitant to be portrayed as a group of militant unionists. In 1919, they drafted a code of ethics for teachers. The AFT had an official 'no strike' policy, and maintained that unionism actually discouraged strikes by offering teachers collective representation and lobbying. They refused to take an anti-supervisor line, and preferred to operate quietly for the first few years.

In 1917, in exchange for the Chicago School Board's reinstatement of teachers who had lost their job due to union activity, the CTF left the AFT. It was a significant loss of membership, but for a short time the AFT membership grew to surpass that of the NEA. Faced with economic constraints, the AFL withdrew support of a full time union president and organizer for the AFT in 1923. The AFT witnessed a decline in membership along with floundering national support. In spite of the political turmoil of

the 1920s, the AFT drafted an organizational philosophy which called for radical changes in the structures of education at the national and local level (Eaton, 1975). A US Department of Education, popularly elected boards of education (to ensure equitable representation), the improvement of teacher welfare and security, curricular changes, and more objective evaluation systems were among the principles which framed the AFT's platform. They logged a series of marginal organizing victories, but remained committed to getting their ambitious philosophical foundations in order.

Teacher unionism: Mid 1920's to present day

At about the time that the AFT faced membership and fiscal decline, the ideological and financial competition between the NEA and the AFT came to the fore. Alarmed that trade unionism was a threat to the credibility of the teaching, the NEA launched an anti-union campaign. Committed to "professional solidarity," the NEA began recruiting new teachers, promising attention to both increased salaries and new standards of educational achievement. Initially the campaign was successful, as AFT membership dropped sharply between 1920 and 1930 (Lieberman, 1956; Murphy, 1990). A counter revolution began, however, when teachers realized that they had few places to turn for a collective voice in matters of employment.

With the rise of the AFT, the rivalry between the two leading teacher organizations festered. Perhaps out of a survival need, more than out of philosophical commitment, the NEA continued recruiting rank and file teachers, offering a special certificate to administrators who enrolled 100% of their staff as NEA members. This recruitment, however, was not an embracing of union ideals. The NEA avoided the use

of words and actions that smacked of industrial unionism, and as Marjorie Murphy writes, "was being dragged into a process of unionization, and unless it adopted the weapons of labor, it faced oblivion" (Murphy, 1990, p.227). The NEA remained grounded in the belief that teachers as professionals did not belong in unions, but did become advocates of teacher participation in school governance (Gelberg, 1993; Kerchner and Mitchell, 1988). While the AFT defended it's affiliation with organized labor, it was cautious not to foster a radical or militant image. Teacher unionists in the AFT recognized the suspicion that surrounded such an affiliation and somewhat reluctantly embraced trade unionism as the means for achieving desired changes in schools (Urban, 1982).

The quasi-corporate structure of governance in schools, institutionalized in the early part of the twentieth century changed little throughout the middle part of the century. There were extraordinary political realities: economic depression, two world wars, and the Civil Rights Movement. Schools remained largely reactive, as did the agendas of the NEA and the AFT. Even though progressive educator John Dewey had for years portrayed schools as instruments of social democracy, the political turmoil of the 1920's through the 1970's resurrected attention to the role of public education in a democratic society.

In the course of the 50 years between 1920 and 1970, the NEA convened several committees and commissions and published a series of policy statements on the role of education in a democracy. As they came to see themselves as purveyors of democratic ideals, the NEA studied structures which facilitated, or denied democratic dialogue on

matters of governance. The NEA remained committed to national affairs and professional development, but by the mid 1900's was giving notable attention to the personal rights of teachers.

Like the NEA, the AFT involved itself in the many social and philosophical issues which surfaced throughout the mid 1900's. Though both organizations mixed economic and professional issues, AFT agenda was tipped slightly toward teacher welfare themes, where the NEA scales were tipped more toward broader issues of public schooling. Some historians, however, have concluded that the agendas of the 2 organizations were quite closely aligned (Eaton, 1975). Even if the intended ends were consistent, the means employed by each organization were in sharp contrast. The AFT, by many accounts, was "infinitely more vocal" than the NEA and earned itself a reputation as being the more liberal and adventuresome of the 2 organizations (Bradley, 7/12/95; Eaton, 1975; Urban, 1982). Where the NEA significantly influenced the formulation of educational policy in areas such as curriculum and teaching methodology, the AFT worked for the realization of material benefits and academic freedom. On issues of governance, especially teacher participation in decision making, the two groups enacted various resolutions calling for "a greater share for teachers in school policy making (AFT, 1929) or "increased participation of the teaching profession in the solution of the social-economic problems of our day" (NEA, 1934). Neither group really tackled the issue head-on; the ideal of teacher voice in decision making was subsumed by larger issues of the day. The particulars of decision making models which included teacher participation were not given close attention.

Paralleling a societal trend, militancy among teacher groups grew throughout the 1960's and 70's. The fallout of aggressive activism for social justice was the establishment of collective bargaining rights and recognition in many states. Public sector labor laws were enacted in various states, legally establishing structures and protocols for bargaining over wages, benefits, and terms and conditions of employment. With the establishment of public sector collective bargaining laws, teacher unions became an undeniable reality in school labor relations. It also meant that for the latter part of the 20th century, union energies could be redirected.

In recent years, the NEA and the AFT have taken lead roles in school reform campaigns. The NEA, seeking to take the lead on many reform issues, announced in 1995 that it would channel "virtually all human and financial resources" into emphasizing education reform and improving the public schools of America (Bradley, 7/12/95). Likewise, the AFT recently launched a national campaign called Lessons for Life, which calls for a collaborative, "common sense" approach to higher academic standards and improving American schools (AFT press release, 1995). In spite of laudable agendas for systemic reform, the two organizations remain divided. Several rounds of failed merger talks, which have occurred intermittently over the past 25 years, suggest a philosophical chasm between the two organizations. However, in the past ten to fifteen years, the philosophies of the NEA and the AFT have become more closely aligned and as recently as February 1996, merger talks were still underway. Some have even predicted that brand new organization, created from an AFT / NEA merger, could happen by the turn of the twentieth century (Cole, 1996).

Analysis: Filling in the fault line

Two theories about teacher organizations have emerged from the historical picture painted in the previous section. In one camp are critics who contend that collective bargaining, the most visible activity of present day teacher organizations, is antithetical to professionalism. Of the objections raised, the most common center around the notion that collective bargaining for public employees is bad policy, as it wrestles sovereign control from public officials (or in the case of teaching, the Board of Education). Another popular objection points to teachers' use of collective bargaining to protect incompetent teachers and secure a tenure which doesn't encourage continual professional growth. According to union critics, organized teachers have pushed their material interests ahead of the interests of children.

In the opposite camp, union supporters contend that it is through collective negotiation that teachers can secure the working conditions which assure professional autonomy and quality education. Neither view is without thoughtful and stoic logic to support its case. A fault line runs between the two theories: On one side is professionalism equated with credential gathering; on the other side, professionalism defined by the status that accompanies quality working conditions and respectable salaries.

The history of teacher organizations is often portrayed as a divorce between, rather than a marriage of, professionalism and unionism. Anti-union historians are quick to criticize teachers for affiliating with the trade union movement, instead of creating a

parallel organization for professional membership. Conversely, there are those who hold that trade unionism afforded the democratic voice that oligarchic professionalism did not provide. The flaw in both camps' logic lies in the dichotomous assumption that an embracing of union ideals requires a militancy and mindset that runs counter to professional decorum.

Most theories about why teachers organized maintain that teachers were interested primarily in material gains, and that professional issues were not of great concern. Thus, trade unionism seemed an attractive way for teachers to get what they really wanted. Economic gain and improved working conditions did often dominate teachers' early organizing activities (Rosenthal, 1956; Urban, 1982). There are those who contend that teachers wanted control more than they wanted economic gain. Urban (1982) for example, strongly posits that the reason that teachers aligned with the labor movement was to deal with position issues that would preserve the status quo (p. 41). The positions that teachers took, according to Urban, were in response to educational reform efforts which superseded their own priorities. Out of concern for their own economic and occupational stability, "teachers consistently opposed reform," and more specifically, the intellectual competence which progressive reformers were advocating.

Rosenthal's (1969) discussion of teachers' influence over policy in two spheres, *position* and *style* captures the basic dichotomy that pervades much of the literature. *Position* issues are those that reflect teachers' desire to seek personal and material rewards. Position issues are sub-categorized as economic welfare and working conditions. These are what Rosenthal calls the "pork chop" issues. For some reason,

position issues have been historically denounced as unprofessional. *Style* issues involve improvements in the quality of the teaching force, educational leadership, curriculum policy, and structure of the school system. Style issues are, by Rosenthal's definition, less personal and are mainly designed to serve the entire system. "That which is economic is not professional" has been the accepted axiom for opponents of teacher unionism, and is borne out in Rosenthal's dichotomy.

It is an oversimplification to assume that positions taken by teacher unions are strictly a matter of personal gain, without consideration of the overall educational good. Mavericks who lead the rebellion against the NEA were operating with two strikes against them: Their gender, and their diminished stature as elementary school teachers. Thus, their entry into the fray was guided by the realization that they needed to carefully channel what little power they held. Perceived as "docile handmaidens," teachers were expected to be loyal workers, operating under the authority of the hierarchy. Under the school governance structures of the 1800's, democracy was not an option available to women, and involvement in policy decisions was deemed "beyond their rightful purview and their professional competence." (Rosenthal, 1969). The classroom teacher was the forgotten person in the movement to 'professionalize' the occupation of which they were the very life's blood. The denial of positions of power and prestige coupled with economic obstacles fueled the teachers' desire to gain respect. Facing the reality that men had become gatekeepers of the profession, women teachers where left with few choices but to fight; trade unionism promised experienced and well connected assistance for the weary fighters. With little power in hand, women elementary teachers grasped onto the

strong union movement underway in the industrial world. By the turn of the century, men and women teachers had come to the realization that unionization held promise for economic stability and professional recognition (Herbst, 1982).

Women teacher's alignment with the union movement in education closely parallels the story of unionism in another predominantly female occupation; nursing. In her book, The Physician's Hand, Barbara Melosh writes, "constructed by white male elites, the professions embodied an organization and ideal of work derived from male experience" (p.22). Male constructions of the profession, in both nursing and teaching, subtly attached a gender specificity. The logic which follows from Melosh's analysis, and echoed by Murphy in Blackboard Unions, is that women elementary teachers organized with labor movement in response to the narrow, exclusionary, and elite conceptualizations of professionalism perpetuated by males. Theirs was not so much an embracing of trade union ideals as a reaction to the "traditional connotations of womanly service" (Melosh, p. 25). Aligning with the AFT was both an act of antipathy toward the privileged conception of profession, and a declaration of teachers' collective desire for democratic voice. This may serve to explain why teachers didn't desire a parallel professional association.

Even in the current era of reform, teacher unions remain plagued by the premise that a union affiliation creates a conflict of interest between economic and professional issues. Somewhere in the middle of the schism lies a rarely explored theory which recognizes that economic and professional interests are not mutually exclusive.

Taking a different angle on Rosenthal's 'porkchop' issues illustrates the point. In assuming that teachers view "position issues" as ways to improve their own economic status, Rosenthal, Urban and others have discounted the esoteric knowledge that teachers possess. It is easy to see where position issues (typically assumed to be economic) are actually intended as style issues; that is ways to improve the overall system and not simply a means of conferring a direct advantage for teachers. When teachers fight for reduced class size, it is more than possible that rather than a reduced work load, they are seeking sound pedagogical practice. When teachers hold out for more preparation time, it could mean an improved delivery of instruction for students, and not just an opportunity to "knock off." Reframing traditional "bread and butter" issues into issues of professional concern casts obvious doubt on the prevailing view that teachers involved in union activity are narrowly looking out for their own economic gain.

What have organized teachers gained?

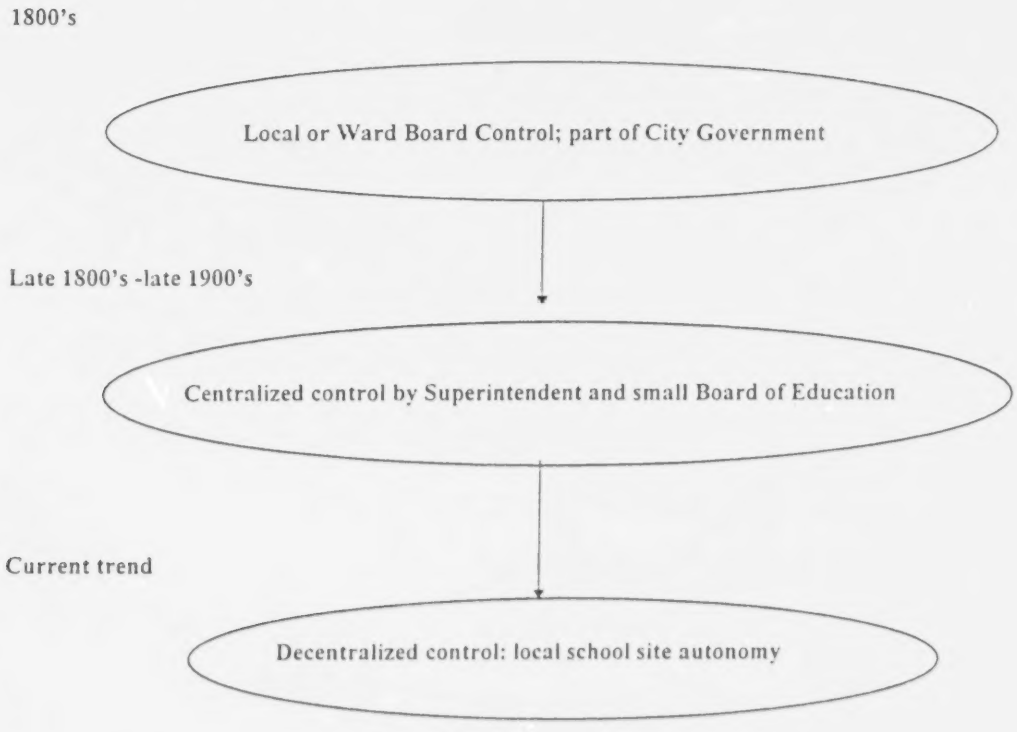
Perhaps professionalism in teaching is emerging through the evolution of teacher unionism. The industrial unionism model applied to education has provided a mechanism for teachers to win a voice in decisions about the conditions of their work. The structure has served teachers well. Teachers have made noteworthy gains in the political system: They've established themselves as a powerful lobby; influencing the establishment of elected boards of education, calling attention to human rights violations, and winning significant legislative support for their right to bargain collectively. Most teacher contracts ensure that class size is manageable, a necessary condition for

classroom learning. Unionized teachers have made steady and significant gains to ensure that they are equitably compensated, and that educational decisions do not lie in the hand of single power sources.

Take, for example, the issue of seniority. Seniority, as a consideration for making placement and promotion decisions, has its roots in episodes of administrative decision making that placed no value on classroom experience. In the absence of any plan for "orderly promotion," early 20th century administrators were free to promote anyone who they deemed appropriate, regardless of previous service (or lack thereof), and in essence, discounting years of experience as a legitimate component of competency (Urban, 1982). Thus, teachers with up to 30 years of meritorious experience could be, and often were, passed over for promotions. Teachers fought hard to ensure that high level positions were not handed out to applicants who had fine examination scores, but no proven ability to work in public schools. The present day challenge to teachers is to hold on to the intent of their contractual gains--such as the seniority issue--but to also find opportunity for growth as a profession. Seniority, in its present form, has come to ensure promotion and privilege for teachers who may lack current knowledge on pedagogical methods; hardly the hallmark of a profession. Such misconstruals of collectively bargained rights have lead to decreased public empathy for teachers; the result has been a need for more responsive, proactive unionism.

Current school restructuring efforts present extraordinary growth opportunities for teachers. Faced once again with a shift in the structure of school governance, teachers are entering into a new generation of unionism (FIG. 1) (Kerchner and Mitchell, 1988;

Figure 1: The devolution of governance in public schools


1800's
Local or Ward Board Control; part of City Government
Late 1800's -late 1900's
Centralized control by Superintendent and small Board of Education
Current trend
Decentralized control: local school site autonomy

Koppich and Kerchner, 1993). Thus, despite the constancy of the themes which have shaped, and continue to shape, labor relations in schools, a number of changes have occurred that put teacher unions in a different position as they begin a new generation of growth. Among them:

The stability of the union movement in education. Public sector union organizing activity has grown rapidly. It has by some accounts been the savior of the union movement. Teaching is one of the most heavily unionized occupations, especially in the white collar

sector, and given membership rates, there is little indication that this will change (Bronfenbrenner & Juravich, 1994). Teacher unions have become accepted as a reality, resilient to waves of educational reform backlash. Battles for recognition and due process that consumed energy of early organizers need not be of primary concern to present day teacher unions. With statutory laws governing collective bargaining, and protections such as equal opportunity laws, some very basic rights have become institutionalized. Significant battles have been fought and won, and unions are moving onward.

Greater creativity and flexibility. The stability of the union movement has offered a sense of security that allows teachers to experiment. Where in the past, teachers and administrators employed a fairly distributive approach to bargaining, they have come to use mixed approaches that honor the need for a written collective agreement, but are flexible enough for progressive growth. As an NEA document describes it, "In between open warfare and complete collaboration, there lies a vast array of possibilities" (NEA, 1991, p.15). School districts are finding ways to build flexibility into their collective agreements; a flexibility that moves teachers closer the professional interests that they have long sought. The Glenview, Illinois 'Constitution' provides a good example of progressive professional growth within a collective bargaining framework. In 1989, the Glenview Education Association transformed its 'contract' into a new document called a Constitution. The Constitution is a legally binding, three year collective bargaining agreement that contains language committing the union and the district to the "growth of teaching as a profession" and to "holding each other and ourselves accountable" for advancing educational practices in the district. In addition to bylaws addressing

conventional issues such as terms and conditions of employment, the Glenview Constitution established new decision making bodies, and expanded roles for teachers. The groundbreaking language offered teachers what they had long sought through collective bargaining: Increased autonomy over their work and the right to become watchdogs of their own professional practice. The Constitution is solid evidence that collective bargaining and professionalism needn't be strange bedfellows.

More mature labor relationships. This is not to suggest that union relationships were ever immature, but they were built on a fairly narrow agenda in the earliest days. The atmosphere of continual hostility, which teachers worked under in the early days of union existence, is changing. With mechanisms in place which ensure democratic involvement and justice--non-partisan elections, due process for dismissal, labor laws which mediate self interest and expediency, and open meeting laws--teachers have redirected energies to become significantly involved in the formulation and resolution of educational policy issues (Kercher and Mitchell, 1988). Artifacts from union history show an emergent maturity, as unions moved from addressing political structures, to establishing quality working conditions, to offering professional development, to producing scholarly works on issues such setting standards for professional certification (NEA and AFT files, LMDC). Discourse remains, with more continuous dialogue about fundamental problems in education. Moreover, there is discussion about ways to collaboratively solve those problems. Unions have learned and grown, and their wisdom stands to serve them well in the new generation.

An expanded agenda for unions. Teachers have begun to assume an integral role in issues of productivity, efficiency, and adequacy in public schools. Conversations at the bargaining table are no longer limited to distributive issues, offered in isolation of changing educational policy. Teachers have become more proactive, for their own survival and the survival of public schooling. Albert Shanker noted in AFT's 1985 publication, The Making of a Profession,

> " If we are to achieve professionalism, we have to take a step beyond collective bargaining--not to abandon it, but to build on it, to develop new processes, new institutions, new procedures which will bring us what teachers want in addition to what we get from collective bargaining: status, dignity, a voice in professional matters, the compensation of a professional."

As Shanker portrays it, the teaching profession is evolving through a series of phases, with collective bargaining being the first step toward the making of a profession. The phases however, are not segmented and successive, but rather, integrative. The interests of teacher unions in the current era are becoming more broadly defined; thereby complicating the ability to disentangle style and position issues. Teacher unions continue to struggle with skeletons from the past--power, professionalism, and voice. however, the ability to address these issues has been greatly influenced by a movement toward decentralization. What teachers want has changed little, how they can get it has changed drastically. Unions must now become watchdogs over developments under the new era of teacher unionism--holding on to the ideals and lessons from the past, and finding ways to integrate them into the expanded framework of labor relations.

Looking backward, moving forward

Just as it did in the earliest days of public education, the ideal of democratic control of schools remains at the fore in current reform discussions. Since it is impossible to know how school governance might have been shaped in the absence of teacher unionism, its justifiable to presume that unions have played a significant role in shaping the governance policies of US schools. Teacher unions, now a powerful lobbying force, have significantly impacted educational policy at the state and national level. Teachers in local affiliates have shown that they can use the collective bargaining process to ensure academic freedom and democratic decision making. Based on the ideals long espoused by teacher unions, unionism has much to contribute in the current era of shared decision making. Democracy in schools, however should not be a "rhetorical convenience" which is invoked to further singular agendas. Likewise, democracy in this era of shared decision making must mean more than allowing many people to "have their say." As Apple and Beane (1995) point out, "...the right to have a say introduces questions about how various viewpoints fit into the fragile equation balancing special interests and the larger 'common good' of the democratic community" (p.10). Teacher unions, administrators, school boards, and other educational stakeholders, have their special interests. What then, can teacher unions do, to ensure that they continue to play an important role in transforming schools while nurturing their professional interests? Shared governance structures such as site based management have the potential to redefine power and policy in US schools. however, if anything has been learned from the history of school reform, its that we can't blindly embrace every reform initiative that

comes our way. Nor can we continually place reforms on top of each other and assume an infinite capacity for change. We have to know what it is that we want to accomplish, and redesign our system to ensure that means and ends are aligned. Drawing from the history of labor relations and school reform, some basic practices and principles to guide the 'new generation' of labor relations are offered here.

Share responsibility for reconceiving the system. Revitalizing public education will require a collective effort. It does not require that all educational stakeholders share exactly the same interests. There are, among all parties in a labor relationship, separate but legitimate interests. The missing component in many restructuring efforts throughout history has been a clearly articulated and agreed upon vision of the desired outcome. A vast majority of literature on successful, large scale organizational change shows that meaningful vision precedes significant change. Nowhere in the history of labor relations have parties used the labor relationship as a means for negotiating a long term vision for education. Rarely have parties sought avenues for discussion which would allow them to find convergence among seemingly divergent interests. Each party in the labor relationship will have to take risks, and each party will have to accept responsibility for negotiating changes in their relationship to develop improved organizational performance. Both the NEA and the AFT are engaged in collective efforts to establish high educational standards, accountability for outcome, and improved teacher preparation. Non-traditional models of collective bargaining, such as interest-based bargaining, offer teachers and school districts a forum for considering the future of their relationship and of public schooling. Practices such as shared decision making can go

hand in hand with collective bargaining. With clarity of institutional and relational goals, schools can ultimately negotiate agreements that reflect a common vision of the future, and hold all parties accountable for change. Shared decision making, as a reform effort, is only one slice of overall school restructuring. Simply implementing SDM councils, simply giving teachers a voice in educational policy, does not ensure that democratic and educational goals will be realized.

Recognize the interplay of economic and professional matters. In some states, where written shared decision making plans are required, there are plans which specify that one seat on SDM councils be assigned to a union representative. This presumes that teachers can separate their 'union' interest from their 'professional' interest. however, wearing a 'union' hat doesn't mean shedding the 'teacher' hat. Where in the past teachers had to focus narrowly on contractual protections, they seem positioned now to be part of a more progressive dialogue. Teachers, parents, and administrators are grappling with complex decisions, thus becoming part of an "intellectual democracy," an ideal that Ella Flagg Young called for in her 1900 Ph.D. dissertation. This forces teachers to think more comprehensively about the vision that they have for their profession. Faced with difficult decisions that may arise in SDM settings, teachers as union members will have to struggle with the question, "what's really important to us in public education?" Shared decision making presents an opportunity for the discussion of issues related to professional practice and protocols. Site level initiatives may require that teachers contractually agree to changes in their work day or professional development provisions. Rather than disconnecting economic and professional interests in the discussion of what

is important, teachers, administrators, and school boards must find ways to ensure that parties can get their needs met. It does require that parties be clear about what they need; a challenge to teacher unions, administrators, and school boards.

Se*ek neutral safeguards*: In the book, Organizing the Teaching Profession, the Commission on Educational Restructuring observes, "Union officers and members, therefore, have had first hand acquaintance over the years with the calculated resistance of groups in power--groups which have utilized their resources to inhibit the exercise of the teachers' right to influence the course of development in the school program." The challenge, as schools are restructured for participatory governance, is to ensure that no single group, including the union itself, dominate the discourse. Thus, there needs to be stewardship over the elements of democratic processes. There are union structures which can ensure this. If, tenure, as it is described by the American Association of School Administrators, "protects the right of students and teachers to pursue and examine even currently unpopular or distasteful ideas," then it has a legitimate place in a democratic organization (Hill, 1996). What might need renegotiating are the rigidities of tenure which have evolved to protect incompetent teachers. Such 'renegotiations' should still take place in a collective bargaining arena, where the contract provides a systematic, stable safeguard for both parties. It seems inappropriate (and in some cases, illegal) to transfer labor relations issues to a site based council. There are ways to mesh site based initiatives with contractual agreements. Contract waivers, which allow deviation from the contract within a specified period of time, give parties a chance to experiment without incurring the transaction costs of opening a contract. Thus, as parties get clear on the

changes necessary to support school improvement, changes to contract language is closely linked to a vision for change. Here again, teachers need to balance the cost of protecting what has become a "sacred cow" with their long term professional goals, examining hard-won protections in a new light.

Identify decisions which are appropriately participatory. As Michael Strembitsky from the National Center on Education and the Economy points out, many people view schools as either centralized or decentralized. He notes, "The issue is not whether you centralize or decentralize, but what should be decentralized and what should be centralized" (O'Neil, 1995). This suggests that teachers should keep an eye on the prize: Involvement in decisions that have educational impact. There are a number of "zero-impact decisions" that could divert the educational community from the important issues of schooling (FIG. 2).

Figure 2: Educational Impact of Decisions by Site Based Councils

Zero-impact decisions	*Minimal-impact decisions*	*Core-Impact decisions*	*Comprehensive-impact decisions*
• Parking spaces • Lunchroom supervision • Faculty lounge • Sunshine Fund • Adult recreation • Bus duties • Refreshments	• Textboook adoption • Parent programs • Inservice days • Small budgets • Discipline policy	• Curriculum • Staff development • Coaching • Instructional programs • Student assessment • Instruct. budget	• School Budget • Hiring of personnel • Deployment of personnel • Personnel evaluation

Source:
Glickman, 1993

Teacher unions, in particular, need to be guardians over how teacher time is being used in site based management. It would hardly seem a step forward to have teachers spending time on decisions about the allocation of parking spaces. Rather, teacher unions have long fought for a voice in educational matters which impact their classroom lives. Anthony McCann, chief negotiator for the Shenendehowa School District in upstate New York, recounts the important role that his union has played in securing teacher voice in matters of curriculum. McCann recalls,

> "I remember when, in 1973, I was on a negotiating team that tried to get teachers a small voice in curriculum development. We had to go through several years of contentious bargaining to get the right to appoint a couple of teachers to a district wide committee with something like 25 people on it...We were told that this was none of our business...'managerial prerogative' was the phrase. This was up to the administration. The bureaucracy had all the power."

Differentiating the current trend toward shared governance with the earlier struggles of teacher unions, McCann noted,

> "Now there's an intellectual recognition that you cannot run a school system effectively if you keep the voice of the teachers out of the decision making."

McCann's story suggests that teachers have successfully fought for a role in important decisions; decisions which allow teachers to apply esoteric knowledge to improve educational practice.

Conclusion

Faced with a fundamental restructuring of educational governance, as they were in the 1800's, present day teachers, administrators, and school boards must struggle to create the structural conditions which maintain democratic ideals and propagate relationships to initiate, regulate, and support educational change. In many ways, teacher unions have come full circle: they are asking for many of the same things that they were

in the earliest days of unionism, and a change in the structure of school governance seems to be the cathartic event to pushing them into a new generation of teacher unionism. Teachers in the late 1800's and early 1900's chose a model of unionism that fit the governance structure of that era. The new governance structure--decentralized and participatory--seems to be forcing parties in labor relationships to redefine their approach to getting what they've long wanted: A voice in matters of educational policy. As Shedd and Bacharach point out in Tangled Hierarchies (1991)

> If schools were to be run like factories, with hierarchical controls and centralized mechanisms for planning, evaluation, and policy setting, teacher associations would have to act like factory unions, resorting to roughly the same sorts of strategies for protecting the interests of their members... If there are grounds--and there are--for believing that unions and employers in public education are now in the process of inventing a new form of collective bargaining, it is because that management ideology itself is under serious attack. (p.177)

All players in the labor relationship--teacher unions, school boards, and administrators have an opportunity to do what they didn't do the first time around: to strategically, intensely, and passionately, negotiate the future of public schooling and their role in achieving the desired end. By reconnecting with history, present day reformers are reminded of what is possible when stakeholders promote the democratic ideals that are central to public schooling.

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